

# USEL MANUFACTURING



## USEL Newsletter

The Newsletter of Ulster Supported Employment

### BEDDING

- Full range of mattresses for the retail sector
- Contract beds for hotels, guest houses and nursing homes
- Divan bases
  - Firm top
  - Spring edge
- Pillows, Duvets, Mattress Toppers, Mattress Protectors



Welcome to our first newsletter, my name is Sam Humphries; I am the recently appointed Chief Executive of USEL. Since assuming the post of Chief Executive I have been finding out just how much the world at large knows about us, and to be honest what I have found makes me realise that the many excellent achievements of USEL over 44 years are largely unknown.

So we decided as a management team to change that by telling people more about what we do. For instance did you know that after 44 years USEL is the largest employer of disabled people in Northern Ireland? Did you know that USEL operates a commercial enterprise in Cambrai Street, where over 70 disabled employees earn a working wage making beds, mattresses, soft furnishings, specialist sports, and equipment bags of all types? Did you know that we support over 1000 people with disabilities, and health related conditions in over 500 mainstream employers through out Northern Ireland?

If your answer to these was no, then can I encourage you to take a few minutes and read on.

The first thing you should know is that we are a commercial business with a highly tuned Social Mission. We exist to provide choice to those with disabilities and health related conditions to find paid employment and to develop within that

employment. We don't exist to make profit, but we do have to pay our way, and we have learned to do that very efficiently over the years.

The second thing you should know is that each of our paid employees has a personal development plan; this means they have access to accredited training which enhances their progress into and within the workplace. We recently achieved OCN accreditation, a key cornerstone in our employee and company development plan.

The third (and for this edition the last) thing you should know is that USEL is a changing organisation, we have a superb body of people who work with USEL and we have a first class management team who guide and direct the organisation. Whatever your previous perception of USEL has been, I give you an invitation to find out more about us as an organisation, through this newsletter. But I also give you an open invitation to contact me and arrange to meet with us and get the facts about USEL. We are actively reaching out to other organisations within this sector to ensure we all provide the service our clients need, and have the right to expect.

Thank you for your interest in the client group we serve.

- Bedding
- Industrial Sewing
- Contract Packing
- Sub Assembly
- Mail Shot Assembly
- Screen Printing
- New Product Development
- Design Service



### INDUSTRIAL SEWING

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**028 9035 6600**

E. Sales@usel.co.uk W. www.usel.co.uk



### GET IN TOUCH

Sales Office: 182-188 Cambrai Street, Belfast BT13 3JH E. sales@usel.co.uk W. www.usel.co.uk

Employment Support: T. 028 9035 6600 F. 028 9035 6611

# USEL People

## A HIGH FLYER

Linda McConnell has certainly set her sights high when it comes to raising funds for charity. In order to raise as much money as possible she took things to the highest level and decided to do a parachute jump. Falling at speeds of up to 120 miles per hour she successfully made her decent back down to earth and in the process raised a substantial amount of money. Of course Linda wanted to show her adventures to all of her friends and had the whole thing captured on video. Or so she thought. Due to a "technical fault" nothing was captured on video and so Linda was asked by her instructor to complete a second jump. Mad or what. This she bravely did and now has the video recording as evidence of her brave achievement.

Linda works for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and is based in Belfast.

She is currently sponsored in her employment by Usel under the Employment Support Scheme.



## Conor McGrath

Conor McGrath has worked at USEL, in all areas of manufacturing, for 6 years. During this time he has undertaken numerous courses as part of the Skills Training for Employment Progression Programme (STEP) including the ILM Team Leader Award, Health and Safety, Assertiveness, NVQ level 2 and OCR CLAIT training. At the moment Conor is working towards achieving his ECDL qualification.

Conor has had to face many barriers on his learning journey, the effect of his disabilities, his initial lack of confidence and previous lack of learning opportunity. He has overcome these with self-determination, use of computer technology, ceasing learning opportunities and seeking support from family, friends and colleagues.

He is now a confident, independent and outgoing person. He has not only experienced the value of learning but extols its worth to others. He challenges himself and looks for learning opportunities to continuously improve himself both personally and professionally.

Conor has said himself that he hopes that his example will encourage other young people with disabilities to strive towards learning and gaining qualifications.



## OCN Approved Centre Status Awarded to USEL

USEL have just been awarded Approved Centre Status by the Open College Network (OCN) to deliver their range of accredited training programmes to USEL employees and the 1200 clients who utilise USEL's support services each year.

The decision to seek in-house centre approval was made to enable the organisation to increase the support "package" that can be offered to those on the various support programmes available to disabled people and those with health related conditions. These services include *Workable* (supporting individuals into long-term paid employment), *New Deal for Disabled People* (giving individuals the opportunity to gain supported work experience, voluntary work and paid employment) and *Work Prep/Pathways* (aimed at getting individuals back into considering work by offering work preparation training and a local placement opportunity).

OCN's range of accredited training programmes is ideal to meet the needs of USEL's client group. Training courses are available in confidence building, personal development, career planning, CV building, interview preparation, the world of work, and health and social care. Each programme is made up of bite-sized chunks of learning, so the learner can build confidence whilst receiving accreditation as they progress through their course. Units can be mixed and matched to meet each individual's specific development needs. In addition, USEL employs practitioners who have been trained as OCN Assessors and Internal Moderators, thereby ensuring professional, high quality training support for learners which both meets the needs of each client and contributes to the personal development of USEL's Employment Services team.

USEL aims to launch the first in-house OCN-accredited programme in November 2006. For further information please contact Joanne Cameron on 90 356600 or email [jcameron@usel.co.uk](mailto:jcameron@usel.co.uk).



# Programmes to Help

## Job Broking

USEL was appointed as a Job Broking Provider under the New Deal for Disabled Programme in July 2001 and has recently successfully tendered for re-appointment and has been awarded full geographic coverage throughout all areas of Northern Ireland.

The aim of the Job Broker Service is to assist people with a disability or a health condition who are in receipt of a qualifying social security benefit to source suitable employment.

The Programme is entirely voluntary and clients are provided with one to one tailored support including career guidance, CV preparation and interview skills training. USEL's Job Brokers focus on the individual strengths of their clients and provide practical pre-employment and in work on-going support. The support is provided for 26 weeks from the date the client commences employment and employment can be either on a full time or part-time basis or under permitted work rules. Under permitted work eligible clients can earn up to £86.00 per week whilst retaining their benefits. Once a client has been successful in finding paid employment the programme offers benefit protection for up to 104 weeks. Employers also benefit, as USEL's Job Broking team identify and pre-screen job applicants matching them to employer requirements and provide advice and guidance on the removal of possible barriers to work and in relation to reasonable adjustment responsibilities.

Further information can be obtained by phoning 028 90 356600 or by e-mail to [jobbroking@usel.co.uk](mailto:jobbroking@usel.co.uk)

## Pathways Programme Extends Across The Province

USEL are pleased to announce the extension to their current Pathways programme. The extension was awarded by DAS (DEL's Disabling Advisory Service) in October 2006. New areas are Enniskillen and Newry, adding to USEL's current Pathways portfolio of Magherafelt, Ballymoney and Lurgan, in addition to delivery of the programme within the TI areas of West Belfast and Greater Shankill.

Pathways is open to individuals within each local area who are disabled and/or have a health related condition. USEL works in partnership with Triangle Housing Association to deliver the programme in each area. Strong partnerships have also been established with the Jobs and Benefits Offices, whose Pathways Personal Advisors refer suitable clients onto pathways. The programme has been delivered as a DAS pilot programme since October 2005 and, although initially slow to commence, has been gathering momentum in recent months and now works with almost 50 clients in the three current Pathways areas. Each locally delivered programme lasts for 12 weeks, and includes work preparation training in a classroom setting followed by the opportunity to take part in a work experience placement within an industry/sector agreed with the individual client.

USEL expect to commence delivery of Pathways in Enniskillen and Newry by the end of November 2006. For further information, please contact Gwen Mills on 90 356600 or email [gmills@usel.co.uk](mailto:gmills@usel.co.uk)

## Training & Development Department

At USEL our aim is to assist disabled people and people with health conditions to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to improve their chances of entering into and sustaining paid employment. This is achieved through the Skills Training for Employment Progression programme (STEP) through the delivery of core training for all participants combined with work experience placements in mainstream employment environments throughout the Province.

The STEP Programme has been developed to include the recruitment of 20 disabled

participants on a fixed term training contract. All participants will be given the opportunity to avail of on-the-job, accredited and non-accredited training with the aim of progressing into mainstream employment.

The STEP Programme is in its 5th year and we will continue to focus on working with all participants individually. In the past four years we have covered OCN courses in Customer Care, Communication Skills, Job Search plus ILM Level 3 Certificate in Management, NVQ Level 2 in Performing

Manufacturing Operations. Adult Literacy/Numeracy Core Curriculum Level 2, OCR CLAIT and Diversity Training.

On-going and planned training includes Health & Safety, Diversity and Dignity in the Workplace, OCN Clait, European Computer Driving Licence, OCN IT Multimedia training, CIPD Level 3 Coaching & Mentoring. In addition a Jobs Club has been established and includes a schedule of world of work and job search related training.

## Workable (NI)

The Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) has recently introduced Workable (NI) as a new programme of support for severely disabled people providing assistance to find, maintain and progress in employment. USEL has been appointed as a Workable (NI) provider and awarded delivery coverage to all geographic areas of Northern Ireland.

Workable (NI) replaces the Employment Support Scheme. USEL will continue in its role as Employment Support Sponsor providing assistance in employment to its 680 Employment Support employees. New employees recruited by USEL will be supported under Workable (NI).

The aim of Workable (NI) is to provide appropriate support to assist people with disabilities to integrate into the workplace and to assist employers to meet their workforce requirements. Workable (NI) is designed to facilitate progress into unsupported employment where this is the right option for the individual.

The programme offers a range of support mechanisms that:

- develop and improve work skills and employability;
- help meet the requirements of disabled people facing significant barriers to working and who may need continuing support over a period of time;
- assist personal development and promote independence;
- encourage employers to participate in the development and support of employees; and
- enable participants to work effectively in a job, focusing on both the requirements of the employee and employer in a planned and structured way.